

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 AF-10 AID-05 SNM-02 DEAE-00
/092 W

-----001194 291334Z /44

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3897

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 2238

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, BM, US, SNAR
SUBJ: MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS -- BURMA'S POSITION

REF: (A) STATE 159747, (B) 76 RANGOON 0653, (C) 76 STATE 037591

1. SUMMARY: BURMA REMAINS NONALIGNED AND A MEMBER IN GOOD
STANDING OF THE "THIRD WORLD" CAMP. IT DOES NOT SEEK A
LEADERSHIP ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL FORA, AND ITS DIPLOMACY
IS MOSTLY PASSIVE. THE BURMESE ALWAYS GO ALONG WITH THE
NON-ALIGNED MAJORITY AND SEEK TO MAINTAIN HARMONY WITH THEIR
REGIONAL NEIGHBORS, PARTICULARLY CHINA, BUT THEY ARE NOT
OTHERWISE READILY SUSCEPTIBLE TO OUTSIDE INFLUENCE ON CON-
TENTIOUS MULTILATERAL ISSUES. THE U.S. CAN SOMETIMES
INFLUENCE BURMA'S POSITION ON LESS CONTROVERSIAL OR TECHNICAL
MATTERS, BUT OUR LEVERAGE IS VERY LIMITED. WE BELIEVE IT
WOULD NOT BE USEFUL, AND WOULD PROBABLY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE,
TO ATTEMPT TO USE THE ONLY REALLY MAJOR ELEMENT IN OUR
BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BURMESE -- NARCOTICS CONTROL
ASSISTANCE -- TO ATTEMPT TO PRESSURE THE BURMESE ON
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MULTILATERAL ISSUES. END SUMMARY.

2. REF B REMAINS ESSENTIALLY VALID, BUT SOME UPDATING
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IS IN ORDER. THE FOLLOWING IS KEYED ON PARA 7 OF REF C.

A. BURMA'S PRIMARY MULTILATERAL OBJECTIVES ARE TO REMAIN
AT PEACE AND IN REASONABLE HARMONY WITH ITS NEIGHBORS
(PARTICULARLY CHINA); TO MAINTAIN ITS LONGSTANDING POLICY
OF NONALIGNMENT VIS-A-VIS THE GREAT POWERS; AND TO KEEP
ITS SOLID "THIRD WORLD" CREDENTIALS. IT WILL PURSUE THESE
INTERESTS IN THE UN AND OTHER MULTILATERAL FORA IN A

GENERALLY PASSIVE MANNER. IT IS NOT LIKELY TO TAKE ANY SIGNIFICANT NEW INITIATIVES, AND WE KNOW OF NO BURMESE INTENT TO PUSH ANY PARTICULAR CANDIDACIES.

B. ON ISSUES OF LITTLE DIRECT IMPORTANCE TO BURMA, SUCH AS SOUTHERN AFRICA, FOR EXAMPLE, BURMA'S POSITION IS VERY STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY THAT OF THE NON-ALIGNED GROUP, AND ITS VOTES ARE RARELY AT VARIANCE WITH THE NON-ALIGNED MAJORITY. IT ALSO TRIES TO STAY IN LINE WITH ITS REGIONAL NEIGHBORS, PARTICULARLY ON REGIONAL MATTERS. OTHERWISE, THE BURMESE DO NOT RESPOND WELL TO OUTSIDE POLITICAL PRESSURE; IN FACT, SUCH PRESSURE OFTEN SERVES TO HARDEN THEIR POSITION. (SEE PARA 5 OF REF B FOR THE NON-EFFECTIVENESS IN BURMA OF OUR INCREASINGLY SHARP LOBBYING EFFORTS OO KOREA IN 1975; IN 1976, THE NORTH KOREAN ATTEMPT TO PRESSURE THE BURMESE AT THE COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT SEEMED TO INCLINE THE BURMESE AWAY FROM THE DPRK POSITION, TOWARD WHICH THEY HAD BEEN MOVING, BACK TOWARD A MORE EVEN-HANDED APPROACH.)

THE BURMESE GENERALLY MAKE NO SERIOUS EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE OTHER COUNTRIES OR MULTILATERAL GROUPINGS ON MATTERS NOT RELATED IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY TO BURMA.

C. THE GUB'S DELEGATIONS AT INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS REMAIN PLAGUED BY POOR COMMUNICATIONS WITH RANGOON AND INADEQUATE INSTRUCTIONS, AS WELL AS BY THE PONDEROUS BURMESE BUREAUCRACY. (SEE PARA 6, REF B.)

D. WITH RARE EXCEPTIONS, BURMESE REPRESENTATIVES ABROAD, UP TO AND INCLUDING THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL, HAVE LITTLE CONFIDENTIAL

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INDEPENDENT POLITICAL POWER AND TEND TO EVADE RATHER THAN SEEK RESPONSIBILITY. MOREOVER, EVEN RATHER SENIOR GUB OFFICIALS ARE USUALLY UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO MAKE DECISIONS ON MATTERS WHICH FOR OTHER COUNTRIES WOULD BE DECIDED BY SECOND OR EVEN THIRD SECRETARIES.

E. THE BURMESE ARE RECEPTIVE TO U.S. REPRESENTATIONS ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES IN THE SENSE THAT THEY LISTEN POLITELY TO WHAT WE HAVE TO SAY. AS LONG AS SUCH REPRESENTATIONS ARE NOT PUSHED TOO HARD, WE CAN SOMETIMES INFLUENCE THE BURMESE POSITION. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE ON LESS CONTROVERSIAL OR TECHNICAL ISSUES ON WHICH THE GUB IS LIKELY TO HAVE NO FIRM POSITION AND IN MANY CASES GENUINELY APPRECIATES THE INFORMATION WE HAVE TO OFFER. HOWEVER, HEAVY PRESSURE, OR ANYTHING WHICH COULD BE CONSTRUED AS A THREAT, IS LIKELY TO BE NON-PRODUCTIVE AT BEST AND COULD WELL BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.

BY FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN U.S.-BURMA BILATERAL RELATIONS IS THE EQUIPMENT WE PROVIDE (PRIMARILY AIRCRAFT) TO HELP THE GUB IN ITS NARCOTICS CONTROL EFFORTS. IT WAS ONLY WITH DIFFICULTY, AND THROUGH KEEPING THE PROGRAM IN LOW KEY AND UNRELATED TO CONTENTIOUS INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, THAT IT HAS PROVED

POSSIBLE IN THE LAST THREE YEARS TO ENTER INTO THE PRO-
DUCTIVE AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP WE NOW
HAVE WITH THE BURMESE ON NARCOTICS CONTROL. MOREOVER,
THE BURMESE FULLY RECOGNIZE THAT OUR AID TO THEM IN
NARCOTICS CONTROL IS AS MUCH IN OUR OWN INTERESTS AS
IN THEIRS. CONSEQUENTLY, THIS AID AND THIS RELATIONSHIP
DO NOT REALLY PROVIDE US WITH A MEANS TO INFLUENCE THE
BURMESE ON MATTERS NOT PERTAINING TO NARCOTICS. TO
ATTEMPT TO SO USE IT WOULD ONLY ENDANGER OUR NARCOTICS
INTERESTS WITHOUT ANY REAL PROSPECT OF INFLUENCING BURMA'S
POSITION ON THE MATTER IN QUESTION.

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